**Essay Writing: Structure, Grammar and Punctuation**

Topics: [Education](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/education), [Higher Education](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/education/higher-education), [Academic Success](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/education/academic-success)

Published: April 25, 2024

Table of contents

[1. Introduction](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/essay-writing-structure-grammar-and-punctuation#1-introduction)

[1.1. Importance of essay writing skills](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/essay-writing-structure-grammar-and-punctuation#11-importance-of-essay-writing-skills)

[1.2. Purpose of the essay](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/essay-writing-structure-grammar-and-punctuation#12-purpose-of-the-essay)

[2. Structure of an Essay](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/essay-writing-structure-grammar-and-punctuation#2-structure-of-an-essay)

[2.1. Introduction](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/essay-writing-structure-grammar-and-punctuation#21-introduction)

[2.2. Body paragraphs](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/essay-writing-structure-grammar-and-punctuation#22-body-paragraphs)

[2.3. Conclusion](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/essay-writing-structure-grammar-and-punctuation#23-conclusion)

[3. Grammar in Essay Writing](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/essay-writing-structure-grammar-and-punctuation#3-grammar-in-essay-writing)

[3.1. Proper sentence structure](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/essay-writing-structure-grammar-and-punctuation#31-proper-sentence-structure)

[3.2. Correct use of tenses](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/essay-writing-structure-grammar-and-punctuation#32-correct-use-of-tenses)

[3.3. Avoiding common grammar mistakes](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/essay-writing-structure-grammar-and-punctuation#33-avoiding-common-grammar-mistakes)

[4. Punctuation in Essay Writing](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/essay-writing-structure-grammar-and-punctuation#4-punctuation-in-essay-writing)

[4.1. Proper use of commas, periods, and question marks](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/essay-writing-structure-grammar-and-punctuation#41-proper-use-of-commas-periods-and-question-marks)

[4.2. Using quotation marks and parentheses](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/essay-writing-structure-grammar-and-punctuation#42-using-quotation-marks-and-parentheses)

[4.3. Avoiding excessive or incorrect punctuation](https://aithor.com/essay-examples/essay-writing-structure-grammar-and-punctuation#43-avoiding-excessive-or-incorrect-punctuation)

**1. Introduction**

The best way to improve your writing is to write. We will help you to get started; you can plan, write and revise an essay with our advice on how to approach it. You may want to start by writing down your essay plans in a table. Having a logical plan can help you to write a better essay. The most successful essays are well planned. Essays that go off the point with lots of extra detail will get poor marks. Stick to the question. Underline key words in the essay title so you really understand the question being asked. It is not about writing all you know about a topic. A little bit of knowledge about the topic can often be better than a lot.

**1.1. Importance of essay writing skills**

As a 'backbone' of writing, essay writing skill becomes a crucial element for university life. At one glance, this might seem very easy - 'everyone can write, what'. True, anyone can write an essay. Even a primary school student did. But to whip up an A-level essay, even an experienced essay writer said "writing an A-level essay is a trying task. Not easy at all." The weight of essay writing was concealed from us. The students kill their future if they do not master this skill. Not in the near future, but very soon. Confident with SPM level of English, these students further study using that very same level of English. None would want to hire them later. With globalization, employers were sterner. They hired the best and that includes language-skilled workers. Aware or not, poor English level had become the number one criterion for many students not to be hired. Their lack of writing skill is the trigger to this problem. An essay is the communication medium in written form. Poor essay skills reflect poor language skills. It might be harsh, but this is the reality. A hard-to-accept reality. Now you are aware of how cruel the future might become. Still not too late to change. Step out from your comfort zone, learn an essay. Further study to a higher level will be more challenging. Using SPM level English in writing a diploma level essay? That's a far cry. Yes, you can improve the language, but to change the writing style? That would be a monumental task. Why burden yourself for not mastering the easiest part at the first stage? It would become handy if you master essay writing. An A-level diploma essay is the gate to a degree level. Master that, the sky's the limit. A good diploma graduate is a unique asset for nowadays industry. Good language level is already a plus. Any diploma holders that continue studying are considered as experienced workers. With a minimum age of 25, they have working experience at a very young age compared to a degree holder. Step again to a comfort zone, which means further study to a degree. With the writing skill in their arsenal, they are guaranteed an easy academic journey. See? The future is not that cruel after all. Students from English-speaking countries do realize the importance of this skill.

**1.2. Purpose of the essay**

For some people, essay writing is a task that is simple because they are naturally good writers. But for others, it can be tiring. Writing something that can change the minds of people is not simple. There are many things to consider when writing an essay, such as understanding the topic, planning what to write, and conveying the intended message. In daily activities at school, college, or work, we are sometimes asked to write something, whether it's an essay, report, or paper. Have you ever wondered why we are asked to write instead of speaking? What benefits can this task provide? The written task is usually referred to as an essay. According to the dictionary, an essay is defined as a prose work that is somewhat informal, where ideas, opinions, solutions, or answers to theoretical problems or cases are presented systematically to persuade the reader. So, almost everything we write and submit to someone else or a lecturer is usually in the form of an essay. A common question that arises is why "essay" is still a popular choice for tasks in the academic world. This is because writing tasks are considered difficult, and many people find writing to be challenging. Therefore, one way to improve writing skills is to assign writing tasks, usually in the form of essays. The nature of these tasks forces us to develop ideas and present them in well-argued and convincing sentences.

**2. Structure of an Essay**

The first step of writing an essay typically consists of the most crucial components necessary for a satisfactory essay: the intro. In the end, you have to realize that the introduction should identify the purpose and relevance of the essay. It often informs the reader of the answer you will give in your essay. It consists of three main elements - the background, the thesis statement, and the map. The background is a general introduction to the topic. It is a good idea to start it with a couple of sentences that set the scene and get the reader interested in the topic. The thesis statement is a single statement that defines the aim of your essay. It may identify two things: an argument and an evaluation or an explanation and an evaluation. The map outlines the structure of your essay. It may be formal or as loose as you want, but it is best to write a clear map to guide you through the essay so that you don't get lost. The next element in your essay, and there are many, is the body paragraphs. This is very basic, the more paragraphs the better the essay (providing that each is effective) and the most common paragraph structure is as follows: your statement, which directly relates to the thesis statement (a clear coherent sentence, or a group of sentences that define what you will be trying to prove in the paragraph), next is evidence to support your statement. This is crucial, you must convince the reader of your statement and the better the evidence, the more the reader will be convinced. This can be in the form of a quote or an example. Once you have evidence, you have to explain it. This is often the most basic bit and you just have to follow through with it. Finally, you have a link to the next paragraph and this can often be a critical evaluation which is explaining how and why your statement and evidence is valid.

**2.1. Introduction**

When you have finished planning your essay and have decided upon your contention and the way you will approach it, it's time to write your introduction. The introduction is your first impression on the reader, and it is important to make it a good one. Your introduction is the "bait" that you are putting out to engage your reader, and it is important to be strategic and well-planned. Your introduction should be designed to attract the reader's attention and give them an idea of the essay's focus. Begin with an attention grabber. The attention grabber you use is up to you, but here are a few ideas: a startling fact or statistic, a quotation, a question, or an anecdote. An introduction should never be so detailed that it includes everything you want to discuss in the essay; it is simply designed to give an idea of what you will be discussing, sort of like a road map. This also means that you should stay away from writing a single sentence that simply states what you will be discussing. Warm your reader up for what is to come, but do not give it all away just yet.

**2.2. Body paragraphs**

The body of the essay serves to explain and elaborate on the thesis statement in depth. There are usually three body paragraphs, each presenting a different idea. They start off with a topic sentence. This is a statement that identifies the ideas that will be discussed in the paragraph. The body of the paragraph presents details which can include facts, examples, reasons, and other items of evidence and relevance to the idea. The concluding sentence serves to provide a transition into the next paragraph, wrapping up the details of the paragraph and providing a sort of mini-summary to the paragraph. Each paragraph should be constructed in this fashion unless there is a specific requirement of the assignment which varies from the norm. An essay usually requires research into the topic and if the assignment does not specifically require something complex, then the traditional topic-sentence type of paragraph is good enough. An assignment may call for a compare/contrast essay, an informative essay, a narrative essay, a detailed description essay, or a cause and effect essay. These are not the only kinds of essays, and the assignment could possibly include one of these types or something completely different. While it is good to know what type of essay an assignment wants, following the instructions is more important. Make sure that what is written fits the requirements of the assignment.

**2.3. Conclusion**

It is important to not introduce any new ideas in the conclusion as this often gives an unwanted and confusing twist to the whole subject. Any new idea should be introduced in a previous paragraph. A way to get around this then is to revisit the essay topic as a whole by re-exploring one of the sentences of the questions raised so as to make the topic, as it were, fresh in the mind of the reader. A fresh emphasis on the topic and the questions raised is the best way to find a solution which strengthens your argument and leaves the reader with a clear impression in where your essay has led. A common fault when writing a conclusion (or when writing an essay in general) is the temptation to summarise. The dull repetition of the rest of the essay is avoided by an assertive conclusion. A realization of the points already considered is still necessary, but the reason for this recollection is to show that the points have led to a specific result, in the shaping of your argument.

**3. Grammar in Essay Writing**

Just to answer why you need to even write well, the answer is simple: "to know that an individual is educated or not." Speaking and writing are the two basics just to know how far we have educated ourselves. A fall in either of the two reflects an error in learning or understanding. Writing has its own impact, you write something on a piece of paper and that is all what your thought is worth on the subject. It could be a note, an assignment, an article, or a short essay, they all carry a written expression of what we are writing. Proper sentence structure is the root of the grammar. A sentence is incomplete if it does not consist of a subject and a predicate. Now to identify a subject and a predicate may seem vague, but without these two one cannot convey anything properly. An idea is formed in mind and then we look for words just to express it. All of us have experienced this frequently that we cannot write what we actually are thinking. This is essentially because we do not form a complete idea. Once the idea is formed, the next step is to see if that can be described. That is all what we do in English grammar. Now an essay is just a collection of ideas. A good essay is one which is able to put the ideas on the mind of the reader. Correct use of tenses can prohibit an idea to get on to the mind of reader. A good essay is one which can carry me away and put on my mind what the writer has desired, and this only is possible if the ideas are well expressed. You must know that tenses describe when an action happened. Unfortunately, every essay on a given subject cannot use a single tense. This becomes a problem for essays on scientific or social issues. Actions in scientific issues are timeless, but were performed at a certain time. Similarly, a social issue might be continuing till date. Now writing any of these in past tense will reflect an error, as the reader will interpret that the action also happened in the past. So the main difficulty is to switch between tenses. Only knowledge of various tenses and its use can solve this problem. So with the teaching of tenses, also make it a point to give various examples to the child just to explain why a particular tense was used at a particular place.

**3.1. Proper sentence structure**

Once you have a complex understanding of the topic at hand, you can formulate multi-faceted thesis statements—statements that state your position and establish the manner in which it will be argued. A complex understanding of your topic can also help you identify common problems in grammar and punctuation, as you will know what kind of sentences you are trying to form and will be able to better check if they actually do what you want them to do. For example, if you are employing the perspective of a particular writer on a historical event, you might inadvertently slip into changing the tense of a paraphrase of his statement of fact that you should be reporting in indirect quotation, and it can be quite confusing to trace what you have done if you do not know about it ahead of time.

**3.2. Correct use of tenses**

Tense conveys the location and timing of an occurrence. The verb forms that correspond with each tenet help distinguish between them. The past, present, and future tenses are the three basic verb tenses. These four tenses can be expressed in English as simple, perfect, continuous (sometimes called progressive), and perfect continuous. The present simple, past simple, and present perfect tenses are most frequently used in academic writing. The present simple is used to state facts and make generalisation. When describing previous events that are anticipated to continue or highlighting how relevant they are to the present, the present perfect is applied.

**3.3. Avoiding common grammar mistakes**

There are some grammar mistakes that are almost universally made, even by those people who have a good knowledge of English. In the following, we will look at some of these common mistakes and how to avoid them. One of the most common grammar errors is the misuse of the apostrophe. Apostrophes are used to show possession or to indicate that letters have been omitted. They are not used to make words plural. For example, "I have two cat's" is incorrect because "cat's" means belonging to the cat. The speaker should have said "I have two cats." An apostrophe should not be used in this instance. The use of "it's" for "it is" is a regular mistake as, with most other words, an apostrophe is used to denote possession. With it, however, the possessive form "its" does not have an apostrophe. This is a common mistake but it is easy to remember because it follows the same pattern as "his" and "whose," neither of which use an apostrophe to show possession. Another common problem is the confusion of the words "affect" and "effect." These are often used incorrectly for each other because people are not sure of the difference in their meaning. "Affect" is a verb meaning to influence or make a change to something. "Effect" is a noun to denote the change itself. For example, "His bad behaviour will affect his grades. The effect of his bad behaviour will be a lower grade." This is often a difficult mistake to remember, but a useful tip is to turn the verb "affect" to "impact." If the sentence still makes sense with "impact," then "affect" is the correct word to use.

**4. Punctuation in Essay Writing**

Punctuation is an important aspect of essay writing as it helps to make the content clearer and more understandable. Proper use of punctuation can help the writer express their ideas in a clearer, more concise manner, hence enabling the reader to understand them better. Most students will be comfortable with the correct use of commas and full stops, but question marks can be a puzzle. It is important to be aware of correct use of all these elementary punctuation marks for successful essay writing. The comma serves a number of uses. It may be used to make the meaning of a sentence clearer, for example: 1. With his brother slipping on the ice was a great source of amusement to him. 2. With his brother, slipping on the ice was a great source of amusement to him. The first sentence suggests that it was the narrator's brother who was slipping on the ice. The second sentence suggests that his brother was a great source of amusement by slipping on the ice. In the second example, the comma prevents the reader from thinking that it was the brother slipping on the ice.

**4.1. Proper use of commas, periods, and question marks**

You need to be sure to have a good understanding of how the comma is being used. Incorrect use of the comma is one of the most common mistakes made in this section. There are several reasons why you might use a comma. To list a few: to separate an introductory word from the rest of the sentence (Well, I'm not so sure about that), to separate a non-defining relative clause from the rest of the sentence (My brother, who lives in London, is a doctor), to separate items in a list (There are three main areas in Tokyo: Ueno, Shinjuku, and Shibuya), to link the two main clauses of a compound sentence, a good way to tell if this is correct is whether the sentence would make sense if the word and, but, or was removed (e.g. Jim went to the shop and bought a newspaper. Jim went to the shop, but he didn't buy a newspaper).

**4.2. Using quotation marks and parentheses**

It is the job of a professional tutor to point out essay writing errors so students can make the required changes. So it is with using quotation marks and parentheses. In many essays, the sentence is adjusted to incorporate information about a source but the sentence still does not work. This is when a student can be pegged with not understanding how to use quote marks and when to use parentheses. Using quotation marks is the primary method of signalling to the reader when material is borrowed. As there are pitfalls to using quotes, there are also many opportunities to use them well. A quote should never stand alone as its own sentence. A quote is meant to be part of the sentence it is attached to, so missing quotation marks can sometimes confuse the reader as to who is speaking. Another thing to avoid is a quote in which the meanings of words are changed. This is typically done when a student feels that he can explain what a particular quote means better than the author, but it is often an indication that the student does not understand the quote. Finally, it is considered bad form to end a paragraph with a quote – it is better to conclude the paragraph with your own words, providing context with the following paragraph if necessary.

**4.3. Avoiding excessive or incorrect punctuation**

In order to have an essay that is correctly punctuated, the writer must bring a sense of discipline to the issue. It is very easy to get into the habit of writing long and complex sentences, but the reader can often be confused as to when one point has finished and a new one has begun. Therefore, it is a good idea to keep sentences to a reasonable length; try to limit them to no more than two or three lines. If a writer is unclear about whether or not to use a comma, full stop or semi-colon, it is a clear sign that the sentence is becoming too long and needs to be broken down. Shorter sentences can also be useful in explaining a complex point; if the reader is confused upon first reading, the re-reading of a simple sentence takes less effort. Another common mistake is the misuse of the comma and full stop; a prime example of this can be seen with the use of the semi-colon. The semi-colon is often used incorrectly; one of its main uses is to join two sentences of equal weight together. This, in itself, is not incorrect, but it often leads to the joining of too many related sentences with the semi-colon and not enough use of the full stop. This can make the writing seem 'list-like' and it becomes hard to distinguish between individual points. An essay should be a flowing piece of writing, and too many semi-colons prevent that from happening. Therefore, it is often best to use the point of full stop when in doubt about the correct use of punctuation. Exclamation marks are another common mistake, often used to try and make a point seem more valid. The more exclamation marks are used, the less impact they actually have. An exclamation mark can be very effective when used sparingly, but you should never really need more than one or two in an essay.